

GLOBAL



FINAL EVALUATION OF UNV'S STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2014-2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

This report is the final evaluation of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Strategic Framework (SF) 2014-2017. The evaluation covers the period from January 2014 to April 2017 with two main objectives: firstly, to look back at the past four years, assessing the results achieved against the stated objectives, outcomes, and outputs; and secondly, to provide useful recommendations in a forward-looking manner for the design of the next SF 2018-2021. The primary target audience of the evaluation report is UNV senior management, as the evaluation responds to specific information needs related to the future strategic direction of the organisation. Secondly, the evaluation report also addresses all UNV personnel¹ and external stakeholders interested in the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

During 2013 UNV initiated the creation of its first SF with the aim to better align UNV's strategies and planning with the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Strategic Plan and to better position UNV within the UN system, as well as to prepare UNV to be "fit for purpose" in the overall changing environment of international development cooperation and the post-2015 agenda. Overall, UNV's SF 2014-2017 envisions a development impact in which societies become more cohesive and stable with enhanced collective well-being. This should be achieved through two programmatic outcomes and one institutional result:

- **Outcome 1:** UN entities are more effective in delivering their results by integrating high quality and well-supported UN Volunteers and volunteerism in their programmes.
- **Outcome 2:** Countries more effectively integrate volunteerism with national frameworks enabling better engagement of people in development processes.
- **Institutional result:** UNV is a more effective and efficient organisation, with improved systems and business practices and processes, well-managed resources and engaged personnel.

Among the main strategic priorities, UNV's SF 2014-2017 introduces UNV's programmatic approach focused on five thematic areas:

1. Securing access to basic social services (BSS)
2. Community resilience for environment and disaster risk reduction (DRR)
3. Peace building
4. Youth
5. National capacity development through volunteer schemes (volunteer infrastructure, VI)

¹UNV personnel includes regular staff, as well as field and regional teams i.e. Programme Officers (that are usually UN Volunteers), Programme Assistants, Programme Managers (in peace missions), Support Officers (missions), thematic experts (BSS).



With the aim to position UNV not only as a provider of skilled volunteers for the UN system, but also as a programmatic partner that contributes to development goals, UNV planned to implement joint UN-UNV programmes and projects at the global, regional and country level, aligned with these thematic areas as well as with individual countries' needs. Programmatic areas 1 - 4, as well as the mobilisation of UN Volunteers directly contribute to Outcome 1, while the fifth programme area on VI in conjunction with research and advocacy efforts leads to Outcome 2. The improvement of internal systems and processes was expected to lead to an increased resource and volunteer mobilisation to more effectively and efficiently deliver on the two programmatic outcomes. Partnerships with diverse actors including UN entities, governments, civil society, the private sector and academia play a crucial role in all areas. Through further institutionalising its Results-Based Management (RBM) approach, UNV also expected to strengthen monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting capacities and to produce more robust data on the two programmatic outcome areas with the main tool being the Integrated Results and Resources Matrix (IRRM).

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The evaluation assesses UNV's SF 2014-2017 at a global, regional and country level, covering the two programmatic outcome areas and the institutional results statement of the SF, including the outcome and output indicators of the IRRM as well as the underlying Theories of Change (TOC). The evaluation follows the evaluation criteria defined by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)²: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the SF. In addition, the evaluation is aligned with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards³ and the UNDP evaluation policy and guidance⁴. Impact could not be assessed through this evaluation due to the short time frame that the SF has been under implementation. In addition, the defined impact of the SF that "societies become more cohesive and stable with enhanced collective well-being" is considered too generic and high level to be evaluated. Even if this were possible, the contribution of UNV's work towards this goal would not be possible to measure because of innumerable other factors that could also contribute to this impact.

Under each criterion, specific evaluation questions and indicators have been developed to guide the evaluation exercise⁵. The overall methodological approach is based on contribution analysis, with the aim to assess in how far the SF 2014-2017 and its related strategies and implementation mechanisms have contributed to achieve the intended outcomes. The evaluation looks at both processes implemented and results achieved, aiming to understand why results have been achieved (or not) and the role the SF as well as other internal or external factors have played.

The evaluation makes use of a mixed methods approach and is based on desk review of relevant documents, online surveys to UNV personnel and to external stakeholders, and semi-structured interviews and focus groups with UNV personnel, partners, UN Volunteers and end beneficiaries. Quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated to verify and substantiate the assessment.

² <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.

³ <http://uneval.org/document/detail/1914>.

⁴ <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>.

⁵ The evaluation matrix can be found in the Annex of the full evaluation report.



LIMITATIONS

The evaluation faced a number of challenges during the evaluation design, the data collection and the data analysis phases, including:

- Slow feedback processes with UNV and difficulties to obtain relevant information, especially regarding the stakeholder mapping and the implementation of the online surveys, which caused delays in the overall evaluation project implementation.
- Time and budget constraints that limited the number of field visits conducted by the evaluation team, which caused an unbalance in the number of stakeholders interviewed in different regions, with Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS) and Arab States being underrepresented. This challenge was mitigated through additional telephone or Skype interviews, as well as through the online surveys through which stakeholders from these regions were able to participate.
- Challenges for UNV regarding the provision of accurate data for some of the IRRM indicators, which caused further delays during data analysis because the evaluation team needed to conduct additional investigation. In some cases, this challenge limited the depth of analysis, as accurate data were not available

KEY FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

The key findings for the relevance criterion are as follows:

1. The SF was an important step towards supporting UNV's stronger positioning in the UN system through clear formulation of UNV's focus and priority areas, which served as overall guiding principles for delivering on its mandate and communicating to partners. The institutional results statement of the SF is highly relevant for enabling UNV to better align with partners' needs and to make it more "fit for purpose" and able to deliver on its mandate. It is also highly relevant with regards to the changing international environment, the increasing competition from other UN agencies and UNV's struggle to stay ahead of developments in the volunteer sector.
2. Although the SF was designed prior to the official establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both the formulation of Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, including the programmatic areas, helped to position UNV as a relevant actor capable of contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. The SF design supports the SDG spirit of "leaving no one behind", to foster peoples' participation and civic engagement. In addition, the majority of partners agree that UNV's work is highly relevant to their organisation. 91% of partners state that UNV's main activity, the integration of volunteers in UN agencies and government institutions, contributes to the achievement of the SDGs. This perception is similar across all regions as well as among UN and non-UN partners. However, there is an opportunity to align more clearly with the SDGs and to highlight how UNV can effectively contribute to the achievement of goals in the next SF 2018-2021.
3. While overall partners have a positive image of UNV and a number of interviewed partners perceive UNV's value beyond the mere provision of human resources, there is a perceived gap among partners between UNV's value-driven communication about volunteerism, on the one hand, and UNV's business model, on the other. Several voices expressed confusion about the concept of volunteerism that UNV supports and the reality, i.e. offering 'paid volunteers' that often provide the same work as staff at UN agencies' offices or in Peacekeeping Missions.





4. The SF design process included an extensive internal and external stakeholder consultation, including UNV personnel and key partners, which added to the relevance of defined outcomes and programmatic areas across regions. However, decisions on indicator targets were taken top-down and without a realistic assessment of UNV's internal capacities or analysis of the external environment. This mainly refers to the definition of targets in the IRRM, especially the mobilisation of 10,000 onsite and 22,000 Online Volunteers per year by 2017, as well as the expected mobilisation of USD 50 million of partner resources. While UNV's management intended to motivate personnel to do its best to achieve ambitious goals, UNV personnel expressed that it has instead led to a certain demotivation among the organisation.
5. Generic and partly incomplete formulation of TOC statements and strategies have limited their relevance for guiding regional and field level work. In this regard, there has been a link missing between the global strategies and the breakdown to the regional and field level for implementation purposes. Knowledge and use of some of the strategies by UNV personnel is limited and thus, their role as implementation mechanisms that lead to effective results can be questioned. At the headquarter (HQ) and regional level, personnel acknowledge the usefulness of the SF and its strategies as overall guiding principles. At the field level, the main constraint for making use of them lies in their generic nature and the need to further concretise and adapt them to the regional and country context. Instead of making use of the strategies, at the field level UNV responded to specific regional/country needs on a case by case basis, reacting to partners' needs and requirements within the overall framework.
6. UNV's programmatic approach is not yet widely known and UNV is generally not perceived as an expert organisation in all five programmatic areas. However, this improves where UNV makes concerted advocacy efforts and implements joint projects, especially at the regional and field level. Asia/Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are the regions that have been most successful in this regard, which is also because the two regional offices (RO) have existed longer than the two offices in Africa. Volunteer infrastructure (VI) has been a crosscutting aspect in all programmatic areas, however, partners, who overall emphasised that Youth and VI are those areas where UNV has core capacities and can find its niche in the UN system, have not understood this well enough. A contributing factor to this perception is that Youth and VI are explicitly linked to UNV's official mandate, while the other thematic areas are not.
7. UNV's services and products respond adequately to the needs of traditional partners and 85% of partners surveyed confirmed that their collaboration with UNV is important or very important to their organisation. This has been confirmed by interviews with partners that revealed that overall they have a positive image of UNV and highly value the UN Volunteers as a skilled and cost effective workforce that arrive with a fresh mind set. However, it is interesting to note that according to the survey, governments and UN entities – UNV's traditional partners – rate the importance of their collaborations with UNV highest, while private sector entities ranked it lowest. This relates to the fact that UNV has created specific approaches catered to these 'new' partners only in late 2016 and therefore still needs to finalise the definition of its value proposition and service offer.

EFFECTIVENESS

The key findings for the effectiveness criterion are as follows:

Regarding Outcome 1, UNV has been successful in supporting UN entities in delivering their results by integrating high quality and well-supported UN Volunteers and volunteerism in their programmes, although the defined targets have not fully been met:





8. While UNV has not managed to reach the ambitious SF target on volunteer mobilisation, it has maintained stable volunteer numbers over the period despite working in the challenging context of declining budgets in the UN system. Nonetheless, the overall trend since 2010 is slightly declining, due to decreasing numbers of volunteers mobilised in UN Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Missions. While numbers have been increasing in development programmes and projects, they could not fully compensate the decline in the area of Peace. Almost 80% of all volunteers are deployed to only three agencies: Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNDP, although UNV has managed to slightly diversify mobilisation with other UN agencies from 2014 to 2017. The highest number of UN Volunteers were mobilised in Africa, followed by the Arab States.
9. There is a trend of increasing numbers of national UN Volunteers, while numbers of international UN Volunteers are decreasing. This reflects a change in the international development cooperation environment, in which new actors are emerging, national ownership plays an increasing role and national talent is increasingly available, especially in middle- income countries (MIC). Consequently, 65.8% of all international UN Volunteers during the period under evaluation were received in low-income countries (LIC), whereas 65% of all national UN Volunteers were deployed to MIC.
10. Overall, there is a bigger gender gap in international assignments, whereas in national assignments UNV has almost reached gender parity. The percentage of female UN Volunteers in non-family duty stations was, as of December 2016, 38%, and UN Volunteers mobilised from the South also increased, exceeding the established IRRM targets. However, while aiming for more gender equality in volunteer assignments is overall positive, the IRRM indicator that specifically aims to increase the percentage of female volunteers in non-family duty stations has not been based on a previous analysis of the volunteer experience by gender. Therefore, it is not clear the extent to which being deployed in a non- family duty station could be beneficial or harmful for women.
11. Although UNV has maintained an adequate number of volunteer modalities⁶ and it has increased the number of initiatives offered to UN agencies, most UN Volunteers have been mobilised under the regular UN Volunteer modality. The UN Youth modality was expected to constitute 30% of all UN Volunteers by 2017. However, it has not been well adopted by UNV's clients, with an average of only 6.5% for the period under evaluation, although there is a slightly growing trend. Nevertheless, on average, 19.7% of the UN Volunteers deployed by UNV were young people ranging between 18 to 29 years of age, and there is a general trend of UN Volunteers becoming younger, with the average age being 38 in 2014 compared with 35 in 2017. There is an overlap between the Youth modality and the regular UN Volunteer modality, as they can cover the same age range and mostly differ by the level of professional experience. Partners that were interviewed expressed confusion about these different profiles.
12. The number of UN Volunteers mobilised through the Global Programmes (GP) remain low in comparison with the overall UN Volunteer mobilisation, with only 2.5% of UN Volunteers having been mobilised in joint programmes or projects over the period under evaluation. Between 2014 and 2016, 66 projects were implemented as part of the GP with the majority of projects in the areas of Basic Social Services (BSS), Peace Building, and Youth. The trend however shows a slight growth over the period under evaluation, indicating that there is a potential to mobilise more UN Volunteers through programming. The Youth GP is the programme with the highest financial delivery and has also mobilised 27.6% of all UN Volunteers mobilised through programming. Furthermore, Youth has seen the greatest increment in funding from the Special Volunteer Fund (SVF) for the 2014-2017 period going from USD 1 million in 2014 to USD 3.1 million planned for 2017. In addition to the late start of GP implementation, UNV's resources when compared to other agencies are quite low, making it difficult to engage in large-scale joint projects. As a result, UNV implemented mostly smaller joint projects with limited opportunities to mobilise large numbers of volunteers.

⁶ Modalities are the types of volunteers that UNV offers to its partners, e.g. regular UN Volunteer, UN Youth Volunteer, Online Volunteer. Under the different modalities, UNV defined so-called initiatives that are variations of the modality, e.g. national/international UN Volunteer, short-term UN Volunteer, UN University Volunteer, etc.

13. With 13,230 Online Volunteers (OV) mobilised in 2016, although the trend is growing, UNV has achieved only 60% of the ambitious target of 22,000 it expected to reach by 2017. However, in 2016 more than 22,000 OV assignments were implemented, and the targets on gender and origin as well as the percentage of Online Volunteers that come from the youth bracket have been achieved. While partners and UNV personnel that were interviewed stated their interest in the OV modality and see it as an innovative form of volunteerism, UNV has not leveraged this modality to the expected extent, and a feasible business model is still under development so that UNV does currently not receive any cost recovery for the OV assignments.
14. 92% of UN entities that responded to the partner survey consider that UNV made an effective contribution to the delivery of their programmes' or projects' results. Nevertheless, interviewed partners remain vague when asked about how exactly UN Volunteers contribute to achievement of results. There is a lack of monitoring and reporting for volunteer contribution to UN entities both within host agencies and UNV itself. This presents challenges when attempting to objectively measure the real contribution of UNV's work in peace and development beyond mere numbers of volunteers deployed and individual storytelling.

Regarding Outcome 2, UNV has made important advancements in integrating volunteerism in international and national frameworks, although some challenges remain:

15. Until 2015, UNV had implemented the post-2015 project through which it made important advancements in integrating volunteerism into UN resolutions and the Agenda 2030, which now provide entry points to engage with Member States and civil society to further advocate for volunteerism and the integration of volunteer schemes and policies. UNV has also produced or supported reports and studies on volunteerism in peace and development, including the State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR) 2015 and the current work on SWVR 2018. Due to the lack of a systematic monitoring system, evidence on the promotion and integration of volunteerism is only available in the context of the post-2015 project and in cases where projects have been implemented under the VI Global Programme area. In this regard, UNV has made some progress approving new VI projects in 2016 in 17 countries, although only seven of them have become operational to date. Outside of programming, UNV maintains advocacy partnerships with diverse organisations at all levels, but initiatives are not streamlined or aligned with a specific results framework. Often, UNV's engagement with volunteer involving organizations (VIO), NGOs or volunteer networks takes place ad hoc and with a low frequency. The aspect of volunteer infrastructure is also a cross-cutting theme in the other four GPs so that Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 of the SF are closely related regarding their expected contribution to the effective integration of national volunteerism frameworks.
16. While VI project results overall cannot yet be assessed due to ongoing implementation, UNV's partners clearly perceive that UNV has made an effective contribution: 69% of partner survey respondents (UN and non-UN partners) perceive that UNV contributes to promoting volunteerism in their projects and programmes, and 60% say that UNV has contributed to creating an enabling environment for volunteerism at national level.



EFFICIENCY

The key findings for the efficiency criterion are as follows:

- 17.** UNV's organisational structure (HQ, Regional, Field) is considered appropriate for implementation of the SF. However, the process of enhancing UNV's field presence is not finalised and UNV has not increased its field-based personnel as expected. The strengthening of the Liaison Office in New York City (ONY) in 2016 and the creation of the RO in 2014 have helped to increase UNV's visibility and improve partner relations at global and regional level.
- 18.** Despite the creation of a national staff position, and the creation of the RO as a part of field enhancement, the Field Units (FU) have not been strengthened as expected. The programming approach has increased work load at field level while most human capacities have remained the same. FUs claim not to have enough time for programming and not enough capacities to build strong, long-term partnerships. Additionally, Programme Officer's (PO) turn over remains high, which limits UNV's capacity to create a consistent relationship with partners at country level and to sustain results.
- 19.** The UNV personnel strategy has contributed to integrate all personnel into one workforce and to improve personnel mobility and talent management. However, there are still measures needed to better retain and promote individuals and tap internal capacities. Although interviewed personnel is committed and engaged with the organisation, a certain decrease in UNV personnel morale has been identified due to the many changes in the organisation that are difficult to digest and that need time to settle down.
- 20.** Overall, UNV's financial resources have slightly increased from 2014 to 2016, still they have not reached the target set in the budget strategy of USD 300 million by 2017. Total programme resources have slightly increased over the last three years despite a decrease of donor contributions to UNV Funds (SVF, Trust Fund, Cost Sharing, Fully Funded). Fully Funded (FF) contributions were considered one of the key contributors to UNV programme budget, but the ambitious financial expectations have not been met. Core institutional funds and other institutional funds like XB (Extra Budgetary Fund) have decreased. However, other institutional funds like VMC (Volunteer Management Cost) and EFP (Expanded Field Presence) increased because of the introduction of the revised cost recovery policy. In addition to decreasing core funding from UNDP, there is a downward trend of resource mobilisation. Despite UNV's aim to diversify financial contributions with emerging economies, most keep coming from OECD countries. The aim to mobilise USD 50 million of partner contributions by 2017 will not be reached.
- 21.** Having assigned USD 3 million for the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) area, UNV made an ambitious planning of developing 25 ICT projects. While 12 projects have been delivered and two of them are still ongoing, the rest of them have not been developed due to a lack of capacity of UNV resulting into missed opportunities to enhance operations, knowledge mobilisation, and information sharing and data management. In addition, ICT has conducted several projects financed by other sources; the OV project funded by Germany, the Results Based Management (RBM) project funded in part by Germany with cost sharing from UNV and the learning platform funded from the learning costs that UNV charges for each volunteer as part of the pro forma costs.





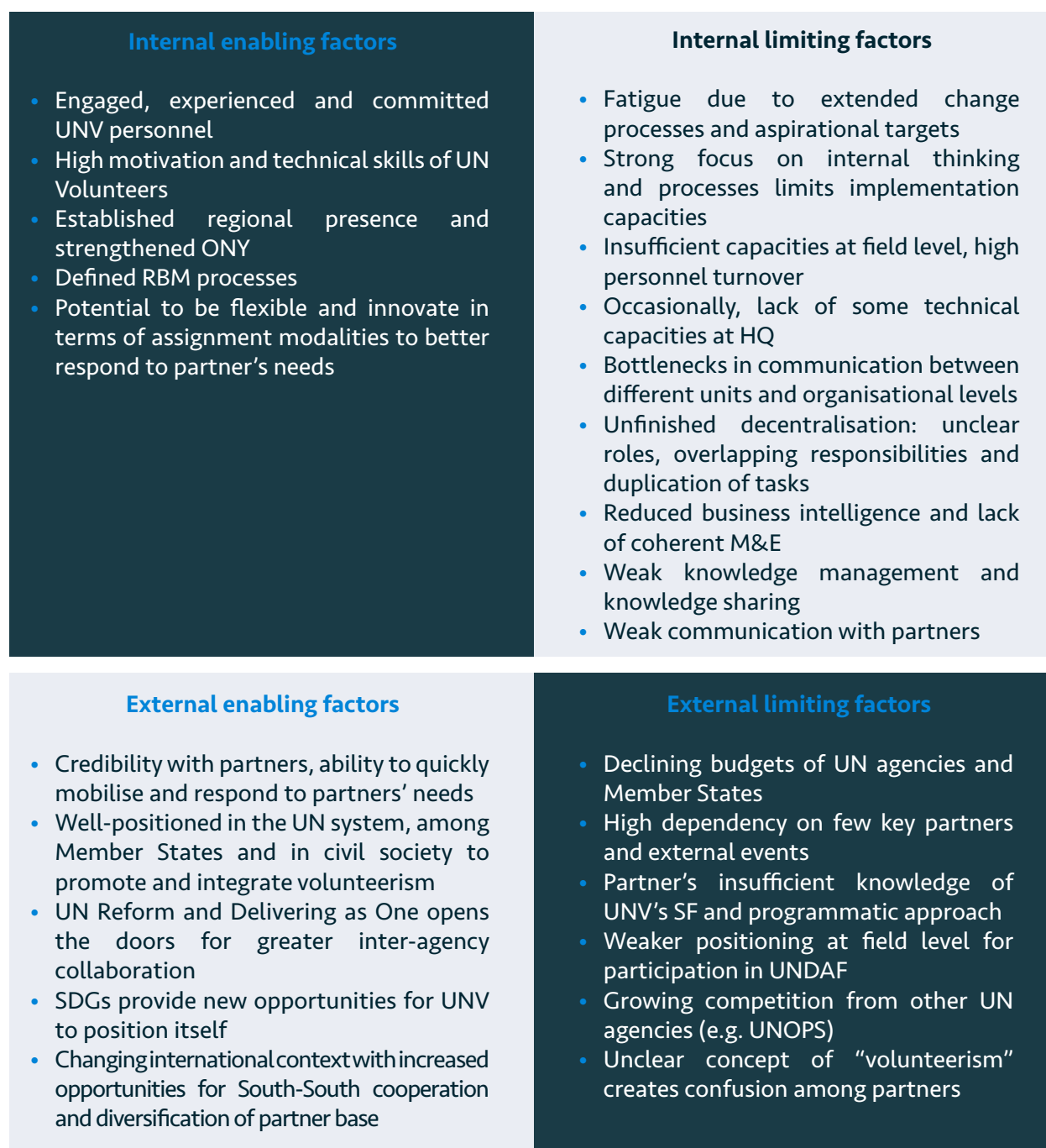
- 22.** UNV has made strong efforts to introduce an RBM system into the organization, which demonstrates that UNV is on a good way to further improve organisational efficiency. The design and implementation of the RBM project has brought many improvements like the RBM framework, the introduction of RBM measures and the reform of the UNV Programme and Project Management system. However, UNV still faces challenges related to reporting on some IRRM indicators; the alignment of reporting on programmes with the IRRM; and regarding reporting on results of volunteerism through the deployment of UN Volunteers. The latter one is a priority for UNV and has been addressed by the development of a results-based Volunteer Reporting Mechanism (VRM). However, some duplications and inconsistencies on the data collection and reporting processes have been identified.
- 23.** Partners and UNV personnel have generally a positive perception on the efficiency of volunteer recruitment and deployment processes, although UNV has only partially achieved target indicators included in the IRRM. Some exceptions exist, and some critical voices have mentioned delays in deployment or varying adequacy of volunteer profiles for the assignments. Challenges in the recruitment and deployment process exist mostly due to external factors and the multiple interactions necessary with stakeholders.
- 24.** As a general overview on internal communication processes, personnel value much more positively the communication between HQ and FU. Communication between RO and FU, as well as RO with HQ has the lowest rating due to the existence of two parallel structures with FU – Development Programming Section (DPS)/Peace and Programming Section (PPS) (old structure) and RO – Programme Coordination Section (PCS) (new structure), which have generated overlapping responsibilities that complicate communication and lead to multiple reporting lines. At HQ level, communication challenges have been identified due to time constraints and difficulties in communicating with each other. In this regard, some interviewed personnel perceive that different units work in an isolated fashion from each other.
- 25.** While financing partnerships are centrally managed, multiple-layer responsibilities for relations with UN agencies and other programming and advocacy partners, as well as the lack of a centralised information system for partner management limit streamlined interactions and can hinder UNV to efficiently respond to partners' needs. Until the end of 2016 no clear strategy and definition of UNV's value proposition for the private sector existed, which had hindered the development of successful collaborations with private sector partners. In addition, no clear responsibilities had been defined within UNV for creating private sector partnerships. The Resource Mobilisation Toolkit and the UNV Guide for pursuing Partnerships with Non-Traditional Donors drafted during 2016-2017 represent a step forward to better define UNV's value proposition and strategies to approach and engage with the private sector and other non-traditional donors.



SUSTAINABILITY

The evaluation has identified a number of internal and external factors that enable or limit the sustainability of UNV's results. These factors are summarised in the following figure:


Figure 1: Limiting and enabling factors for sustaining UNV's results





CONCLUSIONS

BASED ON THE KEY FINDINGS OUTLINED ABOVE,
THE EVALUATION TEAM HAS DEVELOPED
THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS



CONCLUSION 1 (BASED ON FINDINGS 1 AND 5)

UNV's SF 2014-2017 with the two outcome areas reflects the organisation's mandate well, and the institutional results statement is relevant in enabling UNV to deliver on the expected outcomes. However, the articulated theories of change lack clarity to fully reflect UNV's contribution. While strategies, programmes and projects are aligned with SF priorities and partners' interests, no regional or particular country's needs assessment is included and the generic nature of strategies have limited their relevance for operationalisation.

TOC statements especially for Outcome 1 and 2 lack clarity in the logical results chain, including the input level, and the link between inputs, outputs and outcomes overall. This has led to the challenge of adequately defining all of the output and outcome indicators in the IRRM in line with the TOC statements. Assumptions are not always relevant to the outputs and outcomes, while most of the risks have been well identified. The SF and global programmes do not provide any analysis regarding regions' or countries' needs and thus has not provided any specific guidance at the field level. Instead, at country and regional level UNV reacts to partners requirements on a case by case basis. While the SF and associated programmes clearly reflect UNV's added value to the UN system and governments as well as societies overall, the value proposition to other types of partners UNV aims to work with, for example the private sector, is not clear. In addition, strategies that should support implementation on SF outcomes have been formulated in a generic way on a global level and thus, while UNV personnel value the SF as a high level guiding document, strategies are low in relevance as implementation tools at regional and field level. Furthermore, while resource mobilisation is one of the key priorities of the SF, and UNV makes use of annual work plans as well as section work plans with targets, a specific resource mobilisation strategy has not been developed to support this aim.



CONCLUSION 2 (BASED ON FINDINGS 2, 6, 7, 13, 14 AND 15)

UNV's SF provided a clear strategic focus and outcome areas that contributed towards positioning UNV as a relevant actor capable of responding to the 2030 Agenda and integrating volunteerism as a key concept that contributes to the achievement of the SDGs.

The strategic positioning of UNV as a relevant actor to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs is reflected in the two development outcomes. Outcome 1 states that UNV aims to provide support to UN entities to more effectively deliver their results through the deployment of highly qualified volunteers and Outcome 2 builds on UNV's previous advocacy work for positioning the organisation and volunteerism in the international development agenda and for supporting the integration of volunteerism into national and regional policies in order to strengthen peoples' participation for the achievement of development results. The majority of partners agree that UNV's services and modalities are highly relevant to their organisations and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. However, as the SF was designed prior to the launch of the SDGs, there are still opportunities to more clearly reflect how UNV contributes to their achievement. Partners also expressed confusion around the different volunteer profiles, indicating that UNV has not communicated sufficiently on the various modalities it offers. Online Volunteers have been receiving high interest from partners, but UNV has not yet leveraged this modality to market it together with the onsite volunteers and to create a successful business model. While UN partners that implemented joint projects with UNV value the organisation as a partner, overall, UNV's programmatic approach is not yet widely known.

CONCLUSION 3 (BASED ON FINDINGS 4 AND 8-15)

UNV has made important achievements both under Outcome 1 and 2. However, UNV has not met a number of key output indicators especially related to volunteer and resource mobilisation. Some targets defined in the SF have been aspirational and not based on a realistic assessment of the external factors, partners' demands and UNV's capacities to deliver. On the other hand, UNV faces challenges to coherently monitor and report on a number of IRRM indicators, as well as to effectively measure the contribution of its work towards peace and development.

Regarding Outcome 1, 92% of UN entities surveyed confirm that UNV made an effective contribution to their programmes and projects results, while for Outcome 2, UNV reports that 72 countries in 2015 and 44 countries in 2016 made progress in implementing national volunteerism frameworks. These two key outcome indicators show that UNV has been successful in achieving results, although the set targets were not fully met. Nevertheless, the target for Outcome 1 was set at 100%, which is not considered to be realistic. UNV partnership survey results show that partners were already highly satisfied with UNV services in 2014 and in this regard, UNV might have to acknowledge even more its dependency on external factors and find more adequate mitigation mechanisms.

On the other hand, the second indicator for Outcome 1 related to the impacted beneficiaries is not reliable and UNV faces challenges when attempting to accurately report on it. This is also the case with several output indicators included in the IRRM. In addition, there is only a weak link between UNV's work and the indicator for Outcome 2, which makes it challenging to adequately evaluate achievements.



CONCLUSION 4 (BASED ON FINDINGS 6, 12, 14, 15 AND 17)

Implementation of programmes and projects under the Global Programmes started late and they have been partially implemented. The GP on Youth has had the highest financial delivery. Programming has not yet been leveraged effectively for volunteer mobilisation. However, according to partners' perceptions and based on information about projects implemented or under implementation, UNV has contributed to the integration of volunteerism in peace and development projects, including in the creation or strengthening of volunteer frameworks at national level. Volunteer infrastructure has been a cross-cutting aspect in all programmatic areas, but this has not been fully understood by partners. Many perceive that Youth and VI are those areas where UNV has core capacities and should find its niche in the UN system.

UNV invested time in the elaboration of Global Programme and Project documents, so that implementation started in 2015 for the areas of BSS, Peace, DRR and Youth, while VI programming was only initiated in 2016. The integration of the programmes into the IRRM is weak, as UNV only reports on "other" volunteers mobilised through joint programmes and projects and on the financial delivery and the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment.

UN Volunteers mobilised through joint programming represent only 2.5% of all UN Volunteers mobilised between 2014-2017, of which almost 50% have been financed by UNV through the SVF. As UNV is not yet fully perceived as a programmatic partner and has few financial resources available compared to other UN agencies, UNV implemented mostly small joint programmes and projects that have not provided sufficient opportunities for mobilising large numbers of volunteers.

Through these programmes UNV responds to partners' requirements and to regional and countries' needs. This alignment is also facilitated by UNV's participation in United Nations Development Action Frameworks (UNDAF) at country level.

CONCLUSION 5 (BASED ON FINDINGS 26-34)

While UNV has heavily invested in strategic thinking processes at HQ level, UNV has demonstrated limited capacities to implement large-scale strategies.

In that sense, the SF with its intensive investments and changes might have been too much for UNV to cope with in a relatively short period while at the same time having to strengthen efforts for increasing the business volume. UNV invested approximately 1.5 years on designing the different strategies and programmes, leaving only 2.5 years of the SF period for implementing them. This is considered a short time for the high number of changes in processes and structure that UNV had planned for.



CONCLUSION 6 (BASED ON FINDINGS 7, 19, 24 AND 25)

UNV maintains a positive image among a wide range of organisations at global, regional and national level. Although the SF aimed to broaden UNV's partnership base to reduce dependencies and increase resource and volunteer mobilisation, the achievement has been limited. In the context of overall declining budgets, this poses a risk to UNV's long term financial sustainability. Fragmented partnership management and the lack of a centralised information system has limited the capacity to efficiently respond to partners' needs.

UNV builds partnerships for different purposes that cover all areas in which UNV is active: volunteer mobilisation, financing, programming, advocacy work and research. Regarding finance partnerships, although UNV has initiated a number of new collaborations, the overall number of financial partners and the financial contributions have decreased. Regarding programme partners, there is a high dependency on only three UN organizations that host 80% of all UN Volunteers deployed. On the other hand, UNV has signed six new Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) to increase and better plan volunteer mobilisation with UN agencies. There is a wide range of advocacy partners but they are generally managed in an ad hoc manner. With the aim of better centralising partnership information and better managing partners' needs, UNV planned the creation of a partnerships platform but it was in the end not approved as there was no business case developed.

While the SF and the Partnership Strategy mention that UNV aims to build innovative partnerships with non-traditional partners, UNV did not provide a clear value proposition or partnership approach for each type of non-traditional partner until the end of 2016. This lack of clear guidance for creating new partnerships has jeopardised the achievement of results during the implementation of the SF in this regard.

CONCLUSION 7 (BASED ON FINDINGS 9, 16, 17, 18 AND 20-23)

UNV has made important investments in improving its organisational efficiency; for example, decentralising its organisational structure, in new ICT systems for improved volunteer recruitment, deployment and management; and in brand repositioning and communications as well as the introduction of RBM processes. While these investments have contributed to SF results, the decentralisation process has caused communication challenges and only a part of the planned projects have been approved and implemented meaning the benefits for UNV have as yet not fully materialised.

While the creation of ROs and strengthening of ONY have led to better visibility and improved partner relations, the unfinished decentralisation process has caused communication challenges as well as duplication of responsibilities and tasks. In addition, UNV still faces weak knowledge management and information exchange processes, which limits organisational learning and the capacity to innovate.

On the positive side, UNV has made important investments in improving volunteer recruitment and deployment processes although they are too recent to show results. In addition, the implementation of programmes and projects when in combination with stronger communication and advocacy efforts has brought increased recognition and visibility for UNV as a programmatic partner and has contributed to integrating volunteerism more effectively in peace and development. Regarding RBM processes including improved ICT systems, while advances have been made with the RBM Project, implementation of the RBM framework only started in 2016 and the investment in business intelligence has been delayed so that UNV still faces challenges to implement coherent M&E, reporting and knowledge management processes. Due to this, UNV still faces difficulties in measuring its contribution to peace and development.



**CONCLUSION 8
(BASED ON FINDINGS 3, 6 AND 21)**

Although UNV's mandate is focused on the promotion of volunteerism and the provision of volunteers to the UN system, the organisation faces the challenge of clearly communicating its organisational identity to internal and external audiences. Internally, there is a perceived dichotomy between mobilisation and programming while external partners perceive a gap between the communicated value of volunteerism and the provision of cheap labour. UNV faces challenges demonstrating evidence-based results beyond story telling.

With the introduction of the programming approach, a certain division has taken place where some units/ organisational levels embrace the programming approach while others are more focused on mobilisation. This also generates confusion among partners. Additionally, partners perceive that UNV's communication is focused on the value of volunteerism and community based work while on the other hand, UN Volunteers are also deployed to UN offices to perform staff tasks.

Although UNV tries to promote the value of volunteerism through its different communication channels, the organisation does not take sufficient advantage of the potential of the communication and advocacy work that UN Volunteers could do within the host agencies. UNV also does not leverage the community of former volunteers for advocacy purposes. The organisation initiated some efforts related to this that were discontinued.

In addition, UNV does not have sufficient monitoring mechanisms in place to collect evidence-based information on the contribution of the volunteers in their assignments, and this weakens the credibility of communication messages.





RECOMMENDATIONS

BASED ON THE KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS,
THE EVALUATION TEAM PROPOSES THE FOLLOWING
RECOMMENDATIONS:



RECOMMENDATION 1: UNV'S RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND THEORY OF CHANGE

Based on conclusions: 1,3, 5, and 7 | Priority: High | Period: Short term

For the next SF, UNV should design clearer and more concise theories of change with a more aligned results framework. The overall logic of the SF should also explain how UNV aims to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

The TOC should be more concrete and ideally visualised through a graphic representation showing clear links between inputs, outputs and outcomes. It should be accompanied by a realistic Integrated Results and Resources Matrix (IRRM) that fully reflects each element of the TOC to facilitate monitoring, reporting and evaluation of results. UNV should elaborate an IRRM that contains only valid and reliable indicators that UNV is able to report on, as well as ambitious but realistic targets based on previous analysis of potential partner demands and UNV's capacities. The IRRM should be supported by an M&E plan that facilitates monitoring and reporting processes during implementation. UNV also needs to further work on developing indicators and data collection mechanisms to be able to measure the contribution of UN Volunteers towards peace and development. Overall, the next SF should clearly reflect UNV's ability to provide volunteer solutions relevant to the achievement of the SDGs.



**RECOMMENDATION 2:
 RBM AND BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE**

Based on conclusions: 1, 7 and 8 | Priority: High | Period: Mid-Long term

UNV should continue to implement its Results-Based Management (RBM) Framework and pay attention to those elements that strengthen M&E and reporting capacities, as well as knowledge management and information sharing. Further efforts must be made to consolidate data gathering mechanisms that identify valid indicators and appropriate methods to collect data. Business intelligence can complement these efforts through a system that captures and shares business related data to encourage the better use of information throughout the organisation.

A priority should be to integrate different reporting processes and align or streamline different taxonomies and methods that are currently used among different units and organisational levels. This should lead to the ability to better differentiate types of information to be collected (information on volunteer mobilisation and management, knowledge and advocacy and programming, partnerships, among others) and identify appropriate methods to collect this data. Data collection should be streamlined in coherent central databases for key information, preferably by leveraging latest Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In addition, UNV should provide some guidance and templates to the UN host agencies for the creation of work plans that can be used as a basis for reporting on concrete contributions that volunteers make to the organisations' results and the SDGs. This reporting mechanisms could substitute the current performance appraisals and should be done online. In addition, the collection of evidence-based information will allow UNV to complement the currently practiced story telling by an evidence-based communication on the contribution of volunteers.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:
 UNV STRATEGIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS**

Based on conclusions: 1 and 5 | Priority: Medium | Period: Short term

Without investing again too heavily on internal thinking processes, UNV should update key strategies and create "light" versions to facilitate the implementation of the next SF.

UNV should think about reducing the number of strategies by combining areas that are complementary like communications and advocacy or partnerships and civil society engagement strategy. UNV should ensure that strategies are accompanied by practical implementation guidelines or tools for the regional and field level to enable operationalisation. Ideally, strategies will clearly reflect IRRM outputs and will be translated into concrete approaches per region. Regional offices should be leading on creating the regional approach with the participation of HQ and FUs.





RECOMMENDATION 4: PROGRAMMING APPROACH AND VOLUNTEER MODALITIES

Based on conclusions: 1, 4, 5 and 8 | Priority: High | Period: Short term

UNV should focus its programming approach on those key areas where partners perceive it to have a key added value and that can be most clearly linked to its mandate: VI and Youth.

Considering that UNV has made strong communication efforts over the past years to inform partners about the five GP, which have generated considerable interest of some partners, UNV needs to be careful how this more focused approach will be communicated. In addition, UNV should remain flexible to respond to partners' programming needs. A good approach might be to see volunteer infrastructure and youth as two overarching areas under which UNV can still work on specific topics, e.g. volunteer infrastructure for disaster risk reduction.

In line with a more focused thematic approach, UNV should also revise its strategic use of the SVF for programming and evaluate possibilities to invest more in larger projects and programmes instead of implementing a high number of small scale initiatives. In addition, UNV should pay more attention to further mobilising volunteers under other financial modalities in joint projects and programmes.

In addition, UNV should revise the design of the Youth Volunteer modality in comparison with the regular UN Volunteers modality to avoid overlaps and confusion among partners and clearly define characteristics of each modality.

RECOMMENDATION 5: UNV'S ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Based on conclusions: 6 and 7 | Priority: High | Period: Mid-Long term

UNV should continue the process of enhancing field presence and correct the current overlapping of tasks and responsibilities among several units and levels of the organisation. UNV should try to mitigate the dichotomy that has been created within the organisation and foster a more collaborative approach between different units and organisational levels.

Roles at HQ, RO and FU need to be well defined and clear communication channels and reporting lines need to be established. UNV should ensure that further enhancement of field presence does not lead to more bureaucracy but rather to facilitating improved coordination, knowledge management and sharing of experiences between the different organisational levels, as well as among the different units at HQ. The strengthening of the field level should include the allocation of staff positions that fill the role of Programme Officers in key FUs. This will enable a stronger positioning of UNV at the field level and greater continuity of partner engagement for mobilisation, programming and advocacy purposes.





RECOMMENDATION 6: VALUE PROPOSITION PER PARTNER

Based on conclusions: 2, 6 and 8 | Priority: High | Period: Short term

For the next SF, in order to diversify its partnership base UNV should finalise the design of more concise value propositions per type of partner, making clear what the organisation has to offer and why each type of partner should work with UNV. While UNV should continue strong collaborations with the top three UN partners DPKO/DPA, UNDP and UNHCR, it should continue efforts to strengthen its work with other UN agencies and to diversify financing partnerships.

Despite considerable efforts in developing value propositions for programming and financing partners through the Resource Mobilisation Toolkit currently under development, there is still the need to finalise this partnership approach and align it with the next SF. In addition, more concrete guidance should be developed for all organisational levels to strategically work with advocacy partners. UNV should periodically revise the value propositions according to partner needs and global trends.

RECOMMENDATION 7: PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT

Based on conclusions: 6 and 8 | Priority: Medium | Period: Mid-term

UNV should better integrate and coordinate partnership management of all types of partners by assigning clear responsibilities and focal points, as well as by defining internal communication processes in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to ensure that all partnership information is collected in a systematic way and included in a shared database. The partnership platform (CRM) project already identified by UNV can be an opportunity in this regard.

It is important to set up a mechanism to effectively consolidate and share partnership information in order to ensure communication flows between different organisational levels. Additionally, in order to be more efficient and avoid duplications, it is necessary to continue strengthening partnership management and ensure it is better coordinated by a structure that allows for decentralising this responsibility at all organisational levels, while at the same time coordinating all partnership information efforts centrally in order to create synergies and efficiently respond to partners' needs.

UNV needs to ensure it effectively manages and collects information on partnerships from all organisational levels and should move forward the partnership platform project already identified as a good opportunity to collect and systematise all partnership information in one database.





RECOMMENDATION 8: EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Based on conclusions: 8 | Priority: High | Period: Mid-long term

UNV should put more emphasis on the complementary character of mobilisation and programming in order to improve its communication. With this, UNV should further strengthen external communication efforts with partners and leverage the volunteer community of current and former UN Volunteers for advocacy work.

A clear communication of UNV's organisational identity should be streamlined with internal and external audiences. Particularly, communication to UN partners should more clearly explain UNV's concept of volunteerism within the UN system and how the different modalities, including the Online Volunteers, fit into the overall volunteer concept. UNV should especially pay attention to explaining the difference between UN Volunteers deployed to UN agencies' offices and other UN contracts such as Junior Professional Officer (JPO) contracts. UNV's communication products should show a balance of stories of UN Volunteers that work at community level and UN Volunteers that work at the national and regional offices of UN agencies.

Furthermore, UNV should explore ways to tap into the vast community of current and former UN Volunteers for communication and advocacy work taking advantage of the previous efforts made in this regard. Many former UN Volunteers have staff positions at different agencies, but also work with the private sector, NGOs or governments and could support UNV in spreading its messages. UNV could explore the possibility of creating a UNV alumni or champions network with dedicated former UN Volunteers that are willing to further advocate for UNV and volunteerism beyond their assignments. Additionally, current UN Volunteers can support the ROs and FUs in communication and advocacy efforts. This aspect could be better included in Descriptions of Assignment (DoA)/ work plans and agreed on with host agencies.

